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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research on which this paper is based is to develop fundamental understanding of the problem-solving behavior of school superintendents, given the political character of their work environment. Data drawn from interviews with a school superintendent and a long-standing consultant to school boards are relied on as the basis for developing a framework for understanding both the political nature of the superintendency and the character of the linkage between local and state education agencies as viewed by a chief school officer. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the implications of these observations for the political socialization of school superintendents. Related questions associated with research into politics, governance, superintendent-as-self, and training for the superintendency are also raised in the concluding portion of the paper. (Author/IRT)

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The Political Meaning of Superintendency: Theory and Case Analysis of Socialization

by

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A paper to be presented at a conference of the Politics Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association. The paper will be delivered as part of symposium at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on March 29, 1978.

Introduction

The political meaning of superintendency is explored in this paper. Data drawn from interviews with a school superintendent and a long standing consultant to school boards are relied upon as the basis for developing a framework for understanding both the political nature of the superintendency and the character of the linkage between local and state education agencies as viewed by a chief school officer. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the implications of these observation for the political socialization of school superintendents. Related questions associated with research into politics, governance, superintendent-as-self, and training for the superintendency are also raised in the concluding portion of the paper.

The purpose of the research on which this paper is based is to develop fundamental understanding of the problem-solving behavior of school superintendents, given the political character of their work environment. Understanding how superintendents may have altered their orientations to complex problems over the course of their administrative careers, and comprehending the political dimensions of superintendents' actions are the two major objectives of this investigation. By relying upon a life assessment procedure (Dailey, 1971) and by using the focused interview (Merton, Kendall and Fisk, 1956) as the data gathering device, in-depth case studies of school superintendents nominated as "highly effective" are being developed. The data and tentative conclusions reported here reflect the initial effort of what we see to be a larger and longer-term research project. We fully expect the observations here to be modified, expanded, and refined as more data are collected and analyzed.

Superintendent Lincoln, in his ninth year in office in a suburban

Central New York school district, was recognized by significant role-others (superintendents, consultants, university faculty) as highly effective, and was perceived by them as actively engaged in state level educational issues. He has earned his doctorate in educational administration and has followed a rather typical, professional career path from classroom teacher to school superintendent. Superintendent Lincoln has published articles on a variety of education topics, has served as a Visiting Professor of Educational Administration, has contributed to state and national level professional associations through committee work and invited addresses, and has been elected president of a two-county council of school district administrators. He has exercised extensive leadership in a wide variety of local and county civic organizations. Superintendent Lincoln administers a school district enrolling 5800 students and employing 350 instructional staff and 250 support service personnel. The district's budget is over $12 million.

It Really is a Political Game

It is hardly novel to conceive of the school superintendent as one actor amongst others in a political market place. Other researchers such as Iannaccone and Lutz (1970), Wirt and Kirst (1972), Zeigler and Jennings (1974), Cistone (1975), Boyd (1976), Mann (1976), Cuban (1976), Peterson (1976), and Scribner (1977), to name a few, have provided empirical evidence in support of the proposition that politics and education are inextricably linked. School superintendents manifest political behaviors. No doubt they always have. Thus, as a point of departure, we accept the reality and the necessity of a political role for the public school superintendent. The

arena, or market place, wherein the role is enacted, however, has changed strikingly even in the past five years. These changes have major implications for the political performance of chief school officers.

Superintendent control over educational affairs has diminished, or at least in the minds of many, control is perceived to have diminished. Correspondingly, teachers' associations are broadly perceived as having heightened their control over educational matters at both the local and state level. Principals, once one with the superintendent of schools, increasingly create middle-level management associations and thereby add yet another layer of neogitations concerning salaries, and terms and conditions of employment. Federal and state legislation, state education department rules and regulations, and court decisions have proliferated at such a pace that school superintendents frequently face new policy mandates before having fully implemented previous decrees. Declining enrollments and the existence of a heavily tenured, fully certificated faculty have required "retrenchment" and major redistribution of limited resources. Very few superintendents were well prepared for these challenges. The stakes involved in the politics of education appear to have risen, and the political environment of the superintendency has become increasingly complex. The escalating rate of superintendent turnover is but one indicator of the complexity, conflict, and stress attendent to the above work conditions.

Politics and government are different, but one is surely tied to the other. Politics, in Laswell's (1936) classic terms, is "the study of influence and the influential." Lockard (1969) refers to government as the "people and institutions that make and enforce rules for a given society."

It has been said that United States presidents are paramount politicians, but that they frequently lack experience in governing. Just the reverse may be characteristic of school superintendents. That is, they have demonstrated over a career, in ever-more responsible administrative posts, capacities to govern. But perhaps they are under-exposed to systematic political training. To make explicit the distinction between government and politics in the superintendency, consider the following example. Government in schools includes rules endorsed by the school board and enforced by the superintendent on such diverse topics as curriculum, school buildings, athletics, the scheduling of teachers, the arrangement of bus routes, lunch programs, and the management of budgets. Politics addresses the means of influencing people and events so as to insure that such desired educational outcomes are secured. Lockard (1969) argues that the "decisive factors in shaping the ultimate pattern of government are not the authorizing charters but the political methods accepted by the citizenry." So it is that each governmental decision in schools has political dimensions. Thus, a thorough grasp of the personal uses of influence, and knowledge of the influential, are indispensable aides for the school superintendent in governing local school districts and in understanding county and state level educational governance. Superintendent Lincoln's view of the superintendency is that it is more politics than governance, and that this is true on both the local and state scene, and increasingly so on the state scene. It would be naive to rate school superintendents as altogether unschooled in the ways of politics. The question is: How does one develop political power in order to enhance the prospects for effective and successful school governance?

Before examining state level issues, we will briefly focus on Lincoln's local political activity.

At the local school district level, the political character of the superintendency is recognizable, overt, and unavoidable. The superintendent may wear many hats, some more comfortably than others, but at least two hats are uniformly fitted. First, the superintendent is the executive to the school board and advises the school board on all areas of the school operation. Second, the superintendent is a leader in the community whose position requires communication with a diverse set of the educational constituents that display compellingly different economic, ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious characteristics. In reviewing the current context in which the superintendent operates, Goldhammer (1976) states baldly that the superintendent's "primary skills today must be the skills of political compromise, accommodation, negotiation, management of conflict, and persuasion."

Nowhere on the local scene are these skills more necessary than in superintendent-school board relations. Superintendent Lincoln clearly expects his recommendations to be "looked upon with favor and adhered to by the school board, and, if not, there should be a very good reason for it." His point is buttressed by certain assumptions. If the school board is to follow the superintendent's recommendations, then it is incumbent on the superintendent to really know the community and to know, in Superintendent Lincoln's words, the "political ways and means of getting things through." In part, such knowledge must include the political history of the community, the schools, and the programs in the schools which are regarded as effective. A test of the political efficacy of the superintendent is that, in effecting

a change such as the introduction of a new program of study, the superintendent has "a way of doing it in such a manner that it is done, it is effective, and it does not upset too many people."

Mention was made of the necessity for the superintendent to know the community. Superintendent Lincoln's observations suggest that visibility in the local community is a key political resource. The superintendent must attend as many community functions as time permits. Frequent newsletters should only be relied upon as one of several means of illuminating the policies of the school district. Chief school officers need to also realize the importance of using the electronic media, radio and television, and the print media, newspapers and magazines, for further articulating the aims of the school system. Membership in civic organizations provides informal and formal occasions to reach community groups such as the Lions, the Firemen, the Chamber of Commerce, and others. Superintendent Lincoln reiterated time and again how important it is to appear at school-related functions in order to heighten one's visibility and demonstrate one's commitment to those educational and community programs.

But visibility for the sake of visibility is hollow. Clearly, visibility is related to an end, and the amount of visibility in a given time frame may often be associated with a desired policy objective. For example, Superintendent Lincoln noted that his visibility on the local level increases when it comes time to sell budgets and when policies change. People need to be informed of the reasons why a new policy was adopted, and there appears to be no substitute for the superintendent taking leadership in articulating the policy changes. Speeches before local civic groups on particular educational issues or on allied questions permit inroads to be developed

into the community power structure. Furthermore, our data indicate that superintendents are likely to develop contacts with the leadership of both major political parties.

Visibility involves certain behaviors, and the behaviors, in turn, may involve risk. One comment of Superintendent Lincoln's is especially enlightening on this point: "At times you have to step forward and be counted. There are times when you bend, when it is politically advantageous to get a half a loaf, and you have to come back and get the other half sometime later. On the other hand, if the issue is one of such philosophical importance that there is no bending, then you have to stand up and be counted for what you believe is right. You put everything on the line. The stand is dictated by your ability to live with yourself." So it is that political leadership in local school systems requires placing one's very livelihood in jeopardy for matters of conscience and principle. Naturally the hope is that persuasion may, over time, bring the opposition into harmony with positions advanced, but the hazards are formidable.

To recapitulate, Superintendent Lincoln's belief is that politics dominate governance at the local level. His use of persuasion with the board of education, his visibility in the community, and his knowledge of the political ways and means of accomplishing goals were testimony to his effectiveness and success. It would be interesting to pursue the political nature of the superintendency at the local level, but this must be held for another time. The next section explores the political meaning of superintendency at the state level, where politics also appears to prevail over governance.

Superintendent-State Relations: A Focus on New York State

At the present time there a-pear to be certain fundamental changes taking place in New York State with respect to how school superintendents exert political influence on the state legislature, state-level educational agencies, and leading educational officials. The data gleaned in our interviews with Superintendent Lincoln and the school board consultant highlight certain key state issues bearing on the political meaning of the superintendency. Several of these issues are reported and analyzed here.

Changes in the State Educational Environment

In recent years, according to our informed observer of the state educational scene, perhaps the most dramatic shift in educational power is revealed in the make-up of the New York State Board of Regents. The Regents of the University of the State of New York have responsibility for post-secondary as well as elementary and secondary education in New York State. The Board of Regents members, numbering fifteen, are elected by a vote of both houses of the legislature. The perceived change in the character of the Board of Regents is tied to a shift in orientation from a traditional "upstate" emphasis to a "downstate" one. That is, "downstaters, as viewed by upstaters, are more liberal, more union-oriented, more cosmopolitan, more attuned to the problems of New York City, Syracuse, Buffalo, Yonkers and Rochester." This perceived dislocation takes on further meaning when judged according to historical standards. As our consultant observed, the laws of New York State dealing with education have traditionally been "heavily dominated by upstaters, heavily oriented toward the salvation of rural school districts, heavily favoring central schools, suburban school districts, the

BOCES movement,[1] and the cities have been left out in the cold." Thus, the orientation of the Board of Regents has, according to our data, undergone an upstate to downstate swing and a local to cosmopolitan shift, and the membership on the Board of Regents mirrors these changes.

The Board of Regents selects the Commissioner of Education in New York State. A new Commissioner of Education was appointed in 1977, and this is perhaps the most visible change in education at the state level. Gordon M. Ambach replaced Ewald B. (Joe) Nyquist as the Commissioner of Education.

The Commissioner of Education heads the New York State Education Department. Our data suggest that the new commissioner, as viewed from the perspective of school superintendents, is marching to the tune of a different drummer when compared with his predecessors. For example, the following comments from a seasoned observer are illustrative: "Joe Nyquist used to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with these guys (school superintendents) by-in-large, as did Jim Allen and Jon Wilson; but Ambach is standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)." Superintendent Lincoln reflected a similar view and stated that "the new Commissioner happens not always to be completely operating in the interests of what is necessarily best for everybody in New York State; he's very political, he plays both ends, he's very concerned about the union (NYSUT); he wants to make sure he makes a good relationship with the governor; and occasionally

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[1]Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) are intermediate educational agencies consisting essentially of county units. They provide shared services to constitutent school districts.

he is shifting his position to make sure he picks up a good, strong political base."

Although Superintendent Lincoln noted that the Commissioner had yet to serve a full year in office and that he deserved more time on certain questions, he was quick to point out that several of the Commissioner's early appointees to top-flight State Education Department positions did not sit well with school superintendents. He lamented further: "The Commissioner's first goal deals with New York City. There are other places besides New York City." Certain current appointments were regarded as concessions to "Governor Carey and the downstate Democrats," while other appointees were criticized for their ties to the teachers union. The developments were all the more startling in light of historical practice. In the past, many top level positions in the State Education Department had been filled with individuals who had come from the ranks of administration. This pattern was seen as being altered. Until very recently, no major appointee had been drawn from the ranks of practicing school administrators."[2] It is also necessary to underscore the role of the Board of Regents and the governor in influencing the appointments of lofty State Education Department Officers, for our data suggest their influence is substantial.

What have the changes in the character of the Board of Regents and the actions of the Commissioner wrought for superintendents' efforts to influence state policy? The primary organizational voice of school superintendents is the New York State Council of School District Administrators

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[2]In late February, Joseph J. Blaney was appointed Executive Deputy Commissioner. Mr. Blaney had been District Superintendent of Schools for the Southern Westchester County BOCES unit, a downstate BOCES unit.

(NYSCSDA). This is a broad-based but politically inert organization whose leadership, it appears, has recently accepted the need to assert itself, especially given the aforementioned environmental alterations. In response to the Board of Regents' and the Commissioner's appointees to State Education Department positions, the NYSCSDA went on record as "unhappy" with the appointees and registered the disappointment with letters of protest. Such letters register poorly on almost any political seismograph, and it is self-deluding to assume that letters will have much tangible influence. Furthermore, the Commissioner has an "Advisory Council" of superintendents that in the past was used as a strong sounding board for the Commissioner, especially in regard to appointments. Under the present Commissioner, however, the Advisory Council has met only a few times and largely for informational purposes.

The NYSCSDA has, nevertheless, begun to sharpen its political activity. In recognizing that it did not have much clout with the state legislature, and perhaps even less with the new Commissioner and the State Education Department, the NYSCSDA has begun to form a close alliance with the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA). Superintendents lack such clout because they "cannot lay claim to votes directly." School board members, on the other hand, represented by the NYSSBA, are regarded as influence figures in their local communities, and they do have a constituency. Thus it is not unnatural for the NYSCSDA and the NYSSBA to be "close allies," and the organizations "pretty much vote for the same things." This alliance is all the more necessary since even their combined numbers and resources are paltry when compared with the membership and political punch

of the teachers unions in the state. One of the more striking political strategies that has been operationalized in the wake of this marriage, is the tendency for the groups to avoid taking their cases to the State Education Department and the Commissioner, and, instead, moving to lobby directly with the legislature.

The issues taken to the legislature by the NYSCSDA and the NYSSBA include more state aid for local school districts; preservation of save harmless statutes; and the continuation of flat grants to local districts. Superintendent Lincoln characterized the incumbent Executive Director of the NYSSBA as exercising leadership on these matters and "changing the whole image of the quite blasé school boards association to an active one; and I think we're finding this is going to be the only way we are going to make any changes in education which are in the interest of the local community." In another segment of an interview with Lincoln he noted that both the NYSCSDA and NYSSBA are becoming more militant; they are speaking out on issues; and, in the past, one would never see either one of these groups speak out against the Commissioner--"now they just simply bypass him." He depicted these phenomena as "a tremendous change in the operation of education in New York, and from a social and political point of view, it is like declining enrollment versus growth."

Superintendents and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services

As if the politics and the governance of education at the local level and the state level are not complex enough, the Boards of Cooperative Education Services, which are "shared service" intermediate units of the state education machinery, constitute another layer of bureaucratic intricacy.

BOCES operations add further burdens for assessing the political meaning of the superintendency, for they simultaneously may enhance or complicate the efforts of superintendents, and their potential for fragmentation is considerable. First, it should be reported that the Big Five Districts (New York City, Yonkers, Rochester, Buffalo, and Syracuse) are not participants in BOCES units. Thus, the Big Five superintendents have long applied their energies for increased services and monies at the state level and not through BOCES. Second, local superintendents whose districts are included in a given BOCES organizations may be pitted against one another for a "fair share" of services, which, in turn, inhibits the prospects for unified state level lobbying. The linkage between local districts and BOCES units, thus, is a complex one, and an association of politics as well as governance. Not only are the Big Five superintendents cast against the NYSCSDA whose membership belongs to BOCES, but also fragmentation may occur within the district membership of discrete BOCES units.

BOCES units are headed by a district superintendent. District superintendents, are, by law, appointed by the Commissioner of Education. The Commissioner, in most instances, accepts the recommendations of BOCES board directors. The school board consultant noted in our interview with him that BOCES district superintendents have "traditionally been very strong political actors on the local scene." His comments also indicate that the BOCES district superintendency is, by far, "much more of a political appointment than anything else, than any other kind of superintendency in the state." Furthermore, BOCES district superintendent positions are viewed as highly attractive above and beyond their potential for political influence upward

and downward. An indication of the attractiveness can be found in the "machinations" that occur when there is a vacancy in a BOCES district superintendency. Pictured as a "sight to behold," superintendents "stand in line" to capture a BOCES district superintendency. The position is regarded as a more secure position than a local superintendency. It has a level of insulation, is not dependent on local votes, and does not require confrontation with a transient school board. These features of the job may be looked upon as permitting one to "retire" in the position, or may be regarded as allowing one to use the post as a "bully pulpit." For this latter reason, local superintendents are frequently leary of the BOCES district superintendent and they worry about becoming "subordinates." Perhaps an issue of greater concern to local superintendents is the fiscal cost of maintaining membership in the BOCES "shared services" operation; for no matter what level of services is received by a given district, administrative costs are substantial for the local district. Furthermore, once a district enters a BOCES unit, it tends to remain there.

Thus, BOCES units represent a set of educational agencies that are intended to provide the sort of services that aid local superintendents in governing and bolstering programs in their school districts. The ways and means of securing such services, however, clearly fall in the realm of politics, and superintendents differ not only in their perceptions of how to best capitalize on the available services but also in their views on the utility of services once commandeered. Those superintendents who do develop these associations with BOCES personnel, at the very least, acquire understandings of coalition building at the county level. BOCES operations

frequently involve exploratory meetings with county leaders on such issues as federal revenue sharing, the use of county sales taxes for school services and the like. The rationale for coalition-building of this sort lies in the avoidance of duplication of services and facilities. Since so much of local school governance is tied to politiking for increased funds, politiking through BOCES units may lead to the possibility of using federal revenue sharing monies and county sales taxes, presently reserved only for municipalities, for school-related activities.

Political Action and the Professional Practices Board

In the previous section, the possibility of forming county level coalitions through BOCES activities was described. Superintendents' attempts to weld alliances with civic and community leaders was described earlier as a local necessity and it may well serve to buttress the impact of superintendents and school boards on state level educational questions. Such alliances, however, do pose dilemmas for the superintendent. For example, Superintendent Lincoln noted the formation of a regional "Political Action Committee" which was composed of prominent business and community leaders. He suggested that replication of such committees throughout the state might result in "some chance for us to fight back the strong influence of the unions." However, a major dilemma for the school superintendent was described vividly by Superintendent Lincoln: "We have to be very careful because of some of the recent legal actions brought against local executives and others. It is very difficult for administrators to get directly involved in this kind of political action because you cannot use any kind of on-the-job contributions, supposedly, for political action. So what we have done is gone out and

gotten key community leaders who have been affiliated with school boards in one way or another, and they are leading this thing." The relationships, therefore, between such committees and school superintendents are more informal than formal, and where a superintendent draws the line with regard to involvement in this type of political activity is problemmatic. It seems clear, nevertheless, that if superintendents adhere to the adage that "politics and education don't mix," then school districts will suffer in the allocation of state monies and will fall victim to state determined policies that may not reflect administrative concerns.

The raison d'etre of these community political action groups, as noted above, lies in their potential for counter balancing state-wide teachers' union power. Lincoln argued that the "Unions realize their powers are limited by the people of the State." He cited increasing taxpayer disenchantment with union demands, and the example of the Lakeland School District was used. Teachers had gone on strike, and the local citizenry voted 3-1 to "not give in" to the Teachers Associations. "This kind of behavior by the public is certainly going to temper the union's demands because the legislators and lawmakers have to realize that they have to be elected by the people back home." Citizens' political action groups, however, in order to be viable, must operate continuously, rather than episodically, as is so often the case. Furthermore, the linkage with school superintendents has to be built on a platform that emphasizes improved educational programs for children, for if teachers unions have developed a stigma, then it is their image of being too self-serving.

One issue which might galvanize a coalition among community political

action committees, the NYSCSDA and the NYSSBA, is the prospective establishment of a Professional Practices Board in New York State. If the changes outlined earlier have at their base the question of the "control of education," then nowhere does the control question so readily arise as in the creation of a Professional Practices Board in New York State.

Superintendent Lincoln offered a penetrating analysis of this crucial issue. It was noted that the NYSCSDA and the NYSSBA were successful in delaying the Board of Regents from taking actions recommended by the Commissioner and embodied in a Task Force Report. "If the Professional Practices Board goes into effect as envisioned by the Task Force Report, the union will have complete control of education in New York State--entry, inservice education, ethics; not only that, but also to censor or to review any cases of reprimand--the whole thing will be in the hands of the union."

After the NYSCSDA and the NYSSBA pressed their oppostion to the proposed make-up and change for the Professional Practices Board upon the Board of Regents, the Regents elected to take some more time to study the Commissioner's Task Force Report and to hold hearings on the Professional Practices Board. It was not, however, a solitary movement by the NYSCSDA and the NYSSBA, for Lincoln acknowledged that support was enlisted from the Parent-Teacher Association, Chamber of Commerce and the League of Women Voters. Mobilization of these groups successfully got a message to the Board of Regents and to the legislature, that perhaps they should not move too swiftly in adopting all of the recommendations in the Task Force Report.

Regents members were described as in a curious political position on the Professional Practices Board issue. "If they don't take some action,

they know the union will go to the legislators and the legislators will pass the laws. So somewhere along the line, there has to be a compromise." The compromise is yet to be struck, but Lincoln speculated that the hearings will likely reveal the need for the composition of membership on the Professional Practices Board to be more broadly representative. For example, should citizens be included on the Professional Practices Board? Should the majority of the seats on the Professional Practices Board be held by teachers? How far and over what matters do the powers of the Professional Practices Board extend? Answers to these questions will be embedded in a compromise leading to the creation of a Professional Practices Board to oversee education in New York. The nature of the Professional Practices Board "compromise" will serve as an indicator of the political clout of education interest groups in New York State, and although the teachers' union will clearly be strongly represented, the aforementioned actions of the NYSCSDA, NYSSBA and other political action groups may temper what was prospectively a lopsided governance arrangement.

Socialization for the Superintendency

Superintendent Lincoln's observations on his performance as a chief school officer reflect the conflict he experiences as he attempts to mediate the political and governance demands of the job. He recognizes the requirement of attending to both of these aspects of his role if he's to live up to his conception of an effective superintendent; that is, one who is at once able to administer the educational program in his/her school district and, at the same time, exert influence over matters of educational policy and resource allocations for education at the local, intermediate,

and state levels. From his frame of reference, action in both these spheres is vital to securing the educational services required for his district. Yet the formal role expectations held for him by his school board, teachers, and members of his community seem to mediate against this dual function and, if he would permit it, emphasize the governance dimensions of the role. He does not allow this to occur, but as a consequence he is faced with the difficulty of attending to both the governance and the political demands of the role, under circumstances which only give legitimacy to the governance function.

Superintendent Lincoln's concept of self-as-superintendent appears to have a direct bearing on how the governance-politics dilemma is resolved and effectively managed. While we do not have specific data bearing on the processes through which Superintendent Lincoln manages this dilemma, we have several ideas we'd like to share which we believe may be useful in guiding research related to understanding this phenomenon. We believe that other chief school officers probably have experienced a similar normative dilemma regarding how much attention a superintendent should give to the political and governance aspects of that role. We also believe that political demands on the superintendency are increasing, and that the political behavior of chief school officers will increasingly extend beyond the local to the intermediate and state arenas. Political influence on the local scene is not a recent or novel occurrence; however, influencing policy and resource decisions on a state level places new demands on the superintendency--demands we believe most superintendents and those individuals aspiring to that role are ill-equipped to meet.

What influences one's concept of self-as-superintendent? What are the socializing processes through which one acquires the knowledge, skills, and beliefs enabling satisfactory performance of that role? While we don't pretend to have answers to these questions, we believe they deserve attention. School superintendents are critical actors on the educational scene. They make and influence educational policy and resource decisions affecting many children and school communities. Yet we know little about either their social identity as superintendents or the socialization processes through which they acquire the capacities to effectively meet the demands of the role.

What factors and forces influence the development of the individual as superintendent? The model posited below reflects the thinking of Blase (1977) regarding socialization of the educational administrator. Blase posited a model of individual development drawing on and integrating the concepts of socialization, personal and social identity, conflict, social identification and social disidentification. The model Blase develops suggests that the social environment one encounters during the process of new-role learning has much to do with what is learned about a given social role, and that an individual's role identity cannot be understood simply in terms of compliance to social demands. Personal identity influences and mediates social identity, the concept of self one projects to others in a given social situation.

> Personal identity is defined as the individual's felt sense of internal self, and refers to a set of values, beliefs and attitudes which serve to characterize the individual's latent personality. This part of identity expands and contracts, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the face of normative social demands. The importance of examining

> the interactions which occur between the individual's personal identity and the social environment . . . are clear. It would appear that how these interactions are defined, the apparent degrees of similarity and dissimilarity between personal values and normative social demands . . . have important consequences for the development of self (pp. 8, 9).

Blase extends his analysis and suggests that social identity, the individual's expressed or externalized self, reflects the interaction of personal identity and the social environment.

> Social identity consists of beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors that result from the interaction of personal identity and the . . . social environment. . . . It is here that the nature of compromises worked out against a background of personal and social demands begin to surface. Thus, it is through the examination of the individual's social identity, its characteristic expansions and contractions, that it is possible to see a complex construction of identifying and disidentifying elements, welded by the ostensibly inconsistent and contradictory form and substance of one's particular social logic. . . . To be sure, we can expect that the individual's social identity at any given point in time is a result of the kind and degree of his/her identification with demands from the social environment . . .

Thus, the superintendent's social identity reflects the interaction of personal identity and demands of the social environment and, subsequently, becomes manifest in identification or disidentification with those demands. The idea here is that one's social development and the acquisition and internalization of role-specific skills, beliefs, and knowledge reflect the cumulative and interactive effects of both previous role-learning and present behavior. Previous role socialization influences new-role learning.

In the case of Superintendent Lincoln, the primacy he gave to the political demands of his social environment can be conceptualized as a function of the interrelation of his personal sense of identity, previous

role-related socialization, and the demands of the social environment.

The preceding framework suggests several critical issues relevant to the role behavior of chief school officers and the socialization of those educational administrators aspiring to that educational leadership position. If the social identity one chooses to project as superintendent does not reflect identification with the political demands of the social environment, what are the consequences for the superintendent and the constituencies he/she serves? If the pre-role socialization of those aspiring to the superintendency do not expose one to a social environment necessitating either identification or disidentification with situational demands for political behavior, how is one to learn the skills and acquire the knowledge and beliefs requisite to successful performance in such a role?

Superintendents eschewing the political in favor of the governance demands of that role project, in our view at least, a social identity that is clearly out of line with the requirements for success in the social environment of the superintendency. We suspect this is more often the case than not. In those instances where one's social identity does reflect the political dimensions of the superintendent's role, it tends to be focussed almost wholly on the more immediate social environment of a <u>local</u> school district, and does not typically reflect an awareness of the political demands characterizing the larger social environment of an intermediate unit, such as a BOCES, or the state as a political entity.

Indeed, even those superintendents projecting a social identity which overtly recognizes the political demands of the environment may find themselves in a quandary regarding the governance aspect of their role. If the

superintendent is off hither and yon influencing educational policy and resource allocations, who is to take care of the governance demands of the role? In this respect, superintendents in larger school districts may have an advantage over those in smaller or poorer districts. A capable assistant or two, or a well-informed and competent central office staff make it much easier for a superintendent to extend his/her presence beyond the confines of the local district. And this, as we interpret Superintendent Lincoln's observations, is exactly what the social environment of the superintendency requires if one is to be effective in that role: establishing political networks and coalitions within and across district boundaries with both educational and peripherally related interest groups; establishing effective political action groups willing to extend their influence upward and outward throughout the political system, beyond the confines of a single district; and developing the capability to exert influence both within and outside the formal institutional structure of the educational system--by-passing the State Education Department and the Regents if need be, and going directly to legislators and the Chief Executive. These are high risk activities requiring persuasion and persistence, and they can consume a great deal of time--time it seems few school boards are willing to give and few superintendents are willing to invest given the already heavy demands of governing such an enterprise.

The socialization of those aspiring to the role of superintendent tends often to misrepresent, in a substantial way, the political demands of that social environment. The usual career ladder to the superintendency reflects a variety of experience in roles ranging from teaching to serving

as a vice principal, and frequently includes service as a coach or guidance counselor, and prior to entry into the superintendency service as an assistant superintendent. These roles, as they are usually enacted, tend not to provide many opportunities for an incumbent to become exposed to or to function in a social environment having political demands paralleling those of the superintendency. This is not to say that these pre-superintendent roles should or could not provide such learning opportunities. Indeed, we believe that many opportunities might be developed to enhance the pre-role socialization of persons aspiring to the superintendency. Principalships and central office staff assignments, properly conceived, could offer incumbents extensive and varied exposure to both the political and governance demands of the superintendency. Such alternatives might even serve as a filtering or sorting mechanism for those aspiring to that position. Early encounters with the full range of demands characterizing the superintendent's social environment would have the advantage over present pre-role socializing experiences of providing individuals with ample opportunities to develop the sort of social identity we believe is required for effectively performing that role. Disidentification with the demands of that social environment would, of course, be one of the possible outcomes of such exposure; but better at this stage than later.

Finally, special seminars, field trips, and a variety of internship opportunities for <u>both</u> practicing superintendents <u>and</u> role-aspirants could be designed with the aim of developing these individuals' knowledge, skills, and attitudes relative to the political and governance demands of the superintendency. Policy seminars with legislators and other leading figures

on the political scene could offer both superintendents and candidates for that position rich opportunities for informative exchange and dialogue focussed on the political issues of the moment. These and similar role-learning alternatives could be developed at every level in the system; local, intermediate, and state. University departments involved with the training and development of superintendents could easily adopt some of these ideas. The key, in our view, to satisfactorily socializing individuals to the superintendency, lies with providing role-aspirants (and even incumbents) with intensive and extensive opportunities to become exposed to and directly engaged in mediating and managing the governance and political demands of the social environment of the superintendency at the local, intermediate, and state level.

In concluding this discussion, we emphasize that the individual's concept of self-as-superintendent, the nature of the social identity he or she chooses to project as a superintendent, is a critical determinant of how the political and governance role demands are effectively managed. While both need to be attended to, the social environment of the superintendency appears to be becoming increasingly political, and the arena for the politics of the superintendency seems to have expanded far beyond the local scene. Indeed, as we reported earlier, Superintendent Lincoln describes a social environment permeated with political demands at the local, intermediate and state levels.

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